

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 296

By Faulk

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Thomas Taylor Gentry of
Jefferson City.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Thomas Taylor Gentry, a celebrated newspaper publisher and civic leader; and

WHEREAS, renowned for being the owner and publisher of *The Standard Banner* newspaper for more than fifty-three years, Tom Gentry published his first words in a Jefferson County newspaper in February of 1956, and his last published words appeared only a week before his passing; and

WHEREAS, born on a farm in Putnam County to Beecher and Mary Gentry of Cookeville, Mr. Gentry was the middle child of seven; and

WHEREAS, he was introduced to newspaper work by his father, a teacher and school superintendent who purchased the *Putnam County Herald* in 1923; and

WHEREAS, Tom Gentry served the United States as an officer aboard a Navy gunboat during World War II; upon returning home, he earned degrees from Tennessee Tech University and the University of Tennessee in Knoxville with the assistance of the GI Bill and was joined in holy matrimony to his wife, Ellin Stedman Gentry; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gentry served as an agriculture teacher for one school term before working on a research project for the Department of Agriculture; and

WHEREAS, trading the agricultural field for the world of journalism, he soon assumed editorial duties at his father's newspaper; when his family sold the Putnam paper, he scoured Tennessee for a paper to purchase; and

WHEREAS, upon hearing that Judge George Shepherd was looking to sell the *Standard*, the *Banner*, and the *Grainger County News*, Tom Gentry signed the deal in Knoxville and immediately set to work improving his newly acquired newspapers; and

WHEREAS, a seasoned and hardworking journalist, Mr. Gentry depended on his linotype operator and a couple of pressmen but shouldered the remainder of the responsibilities of printing the paper; gathering news, taking photographs, selling advertising, meticulously keeping the books, and running the commercial printing side of the business, he built the newspaper upon a foundation of dedication and endurance; and

WHEREAS, Tom Gentry's personal commitment to his papers did not go unnoticed by Paul Young, one of Mr. Gentry's employees for forty-six years, who said, "I don't think I've seen anybody work harder than Tom," going on to describe multiple nights when Mr. Gentry chose to forgo sleep to make sure his newspapers were accurate and finished on time; and

WHEREAS, when his son, Dale, earned his journalism degree at the University of Tennessee and joined the family newspaper, Mr. Gentry moved into semi-retirement, enabling him to become even more involved in his community and devoting more of his time to agriculture, his beloved hobby second only to journalism; and

WHEREAS, Tom Gentry raised a championship herd of registered Polled Herefords on his 100-acre farm until recently, when he sold the cattle but continued to grow and market hay; and

WHEREAS, just as he gave his utmost to agriculture and to the journalism profession, Mr. Gentry devoted himself wholly to his community, serving on the board of directors for the Jefferson County Nursing Home; becoming an esteemed member of the Masons, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Jefferson County Shrine Club, the Jefferson County Genealogical Society, and the Jefferson County Historical Society; and establishing himself as one of the earliest and longest supporters of the Jefferson County Rescue Squad; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to accolades, Tom Gentry was honored as the County Chamber of Commerce's "Jefferson Countian of the Year" in 1992 and earned much acclaim from his thriving newspapers; and

WHEREAS, he was an active and devout member of the First Baptist Church of Jefferson City, which he served faithfully for many years as a Deacon and as a member of several committees; and

WHEREAS, Tom Gentry was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gentry enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife of sixty years, Ellin Gentry, and was the proud father of Bethann Gowan and Dale Gentry; and

WHEREAS, he will be sorely missed by his four grandchildren, David Gentry, Erin Alexander, Sarah Kosak, and Ann Gowan; and his sisters, Charlsie Crouch and Sue Milligan; and

WHEREAS, an old-style journalist who typed his stories on copy paper and preferred his typewriter over a computer, Tom Gentry leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Thomas Taylor Gentry, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Thomas Taylor Gentry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.